

From: chris.higgins@horizon.ie@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/2/02 12:39pm
Subject: RE: Microsoft Judgement - comments

Hi,

The proposed settlement of the Microsoft anti-trust case doesn't solve the underlying issue - Microsoft's ability to, and intent to control its market place. It also fails to provide any remedy to the rest of the industry for the years that Microsoft abused its position.

Most of the people I talk to are not seeking punishment for Microsoft, but rather a balancing of the playing field. A change in the rules which promotes competition and allows other vendors (the existing vendors, and new startups) to compete in an open and fair way with Microsoft. Then let the consumer choose which product(s) they want.

The issue that exists is that with its current position, Microsoft can smother any sector of the industry by 'integrating' that sectors technologies it's operating systems

In the early nineties, there were loads of independent vendors of TCP/IP software for windows (Microsoft didn't include it with Windows - and you had to pay extra for it).

Loads of companies made money by adding value to Windows, by solving problems for users..

Microsoft eliminated that entire market by bundling TCP/IP with windows.

The same has happened with the office productivity suites - Lotus / Corel have all faded into insignificance because they cannot compete in a market where Microsoft not only owns the operating system - but through that forces people to use it's proprietary file formats..

The same happened again with the WWW browser market - Netscape has died a horrible death because of Microsoft's abuse of it's position.

Microsoft are currently attempting to eliminate their competitors in the WWW server market space by bundling IIS as part of NT - and they have clearly set their sights on controlling the internet with their promises for .NET technology.

When does enough become enough ? Will we all have to wait for

total global meltdown - when there is only Microsoft left ?
Or will we go on forever - promising ourselves that it's really
isn't that bad, and it's a sign of a healthy industry ?

The playing field needs to be level, and kept that way..
To fix the problems of old, Microsoft needs to make full details
of it's file-formats public. It also needs to make full details
of it's network protocols public.

No-one is suggesting that any intellectual property that Microsoft
owns should be given away - but how a sequence of bits can translate
into intellectual property is beyond me.

Microsoft keeps it's implementations that it uses in it's operating
systems - but in the case of new technologies - it should release
the source code for a reference implementation - one that fully
adheres to the standards.

It's up to other people to innovate, but the underlying data format
should be available to all. Why is my data stored in a format to
which only Microsoft own the key ? Is that protecting the consumer
or Microsoft..

If you doubt that statement - try (using any non-microsoft
software) to extract your email in a usable format from a Microsoft
outlook .pst file... If you succeed - please let me know as I have
19Mb of email I can no-longer get access to because I haven't paid
for my software license to Microsoft for the exchange server.
People worry about not being able to get access to information in
the future - there are loads of us being denied access to our own
information *now*.

Based on the current proposed settlement, Microsoft seems to be
exempted from publishing authentication system information. What
is there to prevent Microsoft from adding a password field to
the start of every file format - and claim that the format is
now an integral part of the authentication system ?

Alas, the settlement needs to be clear, concise and needs to define
the environment for all technology companies to operate without
the monopolistic approach of Microsoft.

Many thanks for your time and efforts reading this far,
Rgds,

Chris

CC: Chris Higgins